

TIP BREAKING OF SNAPDRAGONS

After the troubles last fall with shattering and tip breaking of snapdragons, we at Colorado L&M set up some preliminary treatments with a spring crop to try to get a lead as to causes.

Seedlings approximately 6 weeks old were benched 4x5" and grown single stemmed. Each treatment contained 10 plants each of the varieties Margaret, Mountain Pink, Indian Summer, Sunglow, Maryland Pink, Goldrush, Goldmine, Ball Hybrid #1 and Snow.

The treatments made were as follows:

1. Extreme drying before each watering.
2. Soil kept extremely moist - watered almost daily.
3. High nitrates - 25 ppm or above the last month.
4. Our normal method of growing snaps which is with just enough nitrates to prevent stunting and water at about 6 inches of tension.

All plants were started in soil with low nitrates January 16, 1950. They were mulched lightly with leafmold February 18 and fed 1/2# of ammonium sulfate per 100 sq. ft. on March 2. Two more 1/2# feedings were applied March 24 and April 18 on all but the high nitrate plot which received one pound per 100 sq. ft. each of these dates.

At the time blooms were cut April 24 to May 2 they were tested for shattering by rubbing the flowers upward. They were then put in water and stored at a temperature of 50-60° F. and tested again the following two days. None of the spikes from any of the treatments showed the slightest tendency to shatter or "shell" their florets. Bees were plentiful in the houses at the time these flowers were maturing.

A further test was applied to each variety from each plot after they had filled with water. The stems were inverted and shaken with a jerky motion to test them for the tip breaking tendency prevalent in Colorado on some varieties during the fall of 1949. Some tips snapped off the varieties Goldmine and Ball Hybrid #1 from the high nitrate treatment. Other varieties in this treatment did not break nor did any of the snapdragons break from the other treatments.

The vigorous tendencies of some of the hybrid varieties of snapdragons when enhanced by adequate nitrates in the soil will produce overly lush and heavy tips. To avoid these and the breakage involved allow the nitrates to be exhausted from the soil and apply nitrate fertilizers sparingly to Ball Hybrid #1 and 7 and Goldmine and similar varieties.

Your editor,

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